



State of West Virginia
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CABINET SECRETARY

THOMAS L. KIRK
DEPUTY SECRETARY

Date: Friday, March 20, 2020
To: Loree Stark, ACLU
From: Secretary Jeff Sandy, CFE, CAMS
Re: COVID-19 and W.Va. correctional facilities

As our fellow West Virginians and Americans continue to respond to COVID-19, be assured that our Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation and its prisons, jails and juvenile centers are committed to reducing risk and protecting the health and safety of our employees, populations, volunteers, contractors, and others who enter these facilities and do business with us.

DMAPS and DCR have taken numerous steps that represent our best judgment at the present time, informed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, our own Department of Health and Human Resources, and other recognized authorities.

We have provided ample and continuing information, guidelines and expectations to all of our facility superintendents that address in considerable detail:

- employee and inmate education regarding COVID-19
- continued attention to proper hygiene and sanitation practices
- increased emphasis on **frequent** cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas
- screening protocols for inmates, employees, and contractors
- transportation and movement procedures
- practices for sick employees
- quarantine and isolation options.

To limit the flow of traffic in and out of our facilities, are working with the courts to utilize video court appearances whenever possible. We have also asked that our volunteers and state Department of Education personnel not return to our facilities at this time.

In addition, a new and comprehensive DCR COVID-19 policy takes effect today (March 20) that supersedes prior directives. Included in the updated policy are protocols and requirements that address the continued use of CDC-standardized screening procedures for inmates, employees and contractors. Employees and others upon entry to DCR facilities and office buildings must now also have their temperatures taken.

We will continue to update and augment these policies and procedures whenever warranted. All told, we have provided our superintendents, other administrators and staff with the information and flexibility they need to make the best decisions for the health and safety of everyone in their facilities.

You have likely heard that in an effort to limit exposure from outside sources, non-attorney visitation at all facilities remains halted until further notice. Until that visitation can resume, use of electronic visitation and telephone calls continues. The vendors who provide DCR's phone, kiosk and tablet services have all have agreed to provide weekly allotments of free phone calls and video visit sessions. We have also front-loaded important information about COVID-19, appropriate personal hygiene practices and other topics on the tablets and with the kiosks. This information is the first thing the inmates see when they try to access these devices. Of course, inmates can continue to send and receive letters and other correspondence through the U.S. Mail.

Of course, our facility leaders and staff continue to work closely with their respective contracted medical services providers, which have the personnel and protocols in place for these and other infectious diseases. And under the new policy, inmate medical co-pays have been suspended.

As for our employees, we have canceled all out-of-state travel and have encouraged video conferencing in lieu of in-person meetings and gatherings. All of our facilities have a supply of the appropriate surgical masks, and Gov. Justice announced on Thursday that corrections will receive a portion of the 100,000 N95 masks procured by the state this week.

Please know that your support has been crucial to the success of this department and its Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation. I very much appreciate your inquiry, and agree that we must ensure that all West Virginia are kept from harm's way. I know that you and your fellow legislators will help us achieve that vital mission.